

A

1608/5876

S E R M O N

PREACHED AT THE

OPENING of the CHAPEL in ESSEX-HOUSE,
ESSEX-STREET, in the STRAND,

On SUNDAY, APRIL 17, 1774.

B Y

THEOPHILUS LINDSEY, M. A.

The true unity of Christians consists not in *unity of opinion* in the bond of *ignorance*, or *unity of practice* in the bond of *hypocrisy*, but in the *unity of the spirit* in the bond of *peace*.

Dr. CLARKE's Sermons, Vol. III. p. 316.

B E L F A S T:

PRINTED BY JAMES MAGEE, IN BRIDGE-STREET.

MDCCLXXIV.

[PRICE, Three-pence.]

1608/5876



T H E

P R A Y E R before the SERMON.*

*U*NTO thee do we lift up our eyes, O thou that dwellest in the Heavens!

O Lord, the great and glorious God, who hast made all things, and sustaineſt and orderest all things by thy wiſe and good providence; who givest wiſdom to all that ask it of thee; to whom alone we look up for a bleſſing, and ſucceſs on all that we take in hand.

We beſeech thee to look down upon us thy creatures and ſervants, who have here aſſembled ourſelves together as the diſciples of thy Son Jeſus Chriſt, to edify one another in thy holy word; and to render unto thee, O thou moſt high, that ſupreme worſhip, reverence, and praife, which are only due unto thee: *For thou art God alone; and beſide thee there is none other.*

May we be found among thy *true worſhippers*; ſuch as *thou ſeekeſt to worſhip thee*: and make us ever mindful of that *pure and undefiled Religion before thee our God and Father*, which thou haſt told us, conſiſteth in acts of mercy and kindneſs, and in *keeping ourſelves unſpotted from the world.*

* The prayers before and after the ſermon were by no means intended to have been made public; but are printed at the requeſt of ſome of the hearers.

Increase the number of thy faithful Ministers, whose honourable employ it is to bring men to know thee, and the way to eternal life.

Particularly assist thine unworthy servant, whom by a singular providence thou hast called to be a teacher of thy holy gospel in this place. May he *take heed unto himself, and his doctrine; studying to shew himself approved of thee, and furnished to every good work.* Enlighten him more and more with the knowledge of thy truth; and enable him to speak it with all boldness, that he may not shun to declare the whole counsel of God to others, as he shall learn it himself.

Give success to his labours, that he may *make full proof of his ministry; and save himself and those that hear him!* that some may be often called away from the too eager pursuit of a vain world that profiteth not; if any live in wilful sin, dishonesty, or vicious practice, that they may repent and be converted; and that we all may become more acquainted with thee and our duty, and better fitted to act our part in this trying uncertain world, with integrity, patience and fortitude: and that thus doing thy will on earth, and being found faithful in our several stations, we may, in the end, have our place in that kingdom of glory and happiness to which thou hast called us by Jesus Christ our Lord.

EPHESIANS

EPHESIANS iv. 3.

Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

HAD the benevolent doctrine of the gospel produced the fruits that might have been expected in the lives of its Professors, they would have been as remarkable for their love to each other as they have been too often for the contrary disposition; and what was said of the first disciples of Jesus, would have been verified of their successors to the end of time; *Lo, how these Christians love one another!*

Love to all, even to enemies the most cruel and injurious, is bound upon us by that most engaging motive; *That we may be the children of our Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. Matth. v. 45.*

Much more then are we to love those, who are kindly disposed towards us; our brethren, and fellow disciples of the same Saviour; be their religious opinions ever so different from our own. For thereby they do us no injury; and if in error the most blind and wilful, they are not accountable to us for it, and they only will suffer by continuing in it.

It was by this agreement in charity, and not so much in religious opinions, that our Lord
was

was desirous his followers should be distinguished from all other men; where he says, John xiii. 35. *By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.*

His apostles, and first disciples, kept their Master's words in remembrance, diligently observed them, and taught them to others. Charity, peace, and union amongst Believers, is the pleasing theme they are continually dwelling upon; the burden of all their Writings. The exhortation of St. Paul before us, relates primarily and more immediately to the Ephesian Converts to whom he addresses it. But it is no less suited to all others, who in their respective circumstances are to endeavour to *keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*

The unity of the Spirit, as appeareth from the context; was the kindness and harmony amongst Christians, their just deference for each other, and regard for the common good, at that time, *when Believers were very generally favoured with extraordinary gifts of the holy Spirit.* And since those miraculous powers have been withdrawn, which happened very soon, *the unity of the Spirit*, is the kind affection, good order, and attention to mutual edification, which ought to subsist among those who profess the doctrine of Christ, *which was dictated by the same holy Spirit of God:* Something above the purest friendships of this world, as much as the motives, views and excellence of the gospel, surpassed the wisdom of man:
an

an endeavour to make all those wise and virtuous with whom we are connected, and thereby to qualify ourselves with them, for perfect and durable felicity.

We shall be able to learn more particularly the nature of this *unity of the Spirit*, to which our apostle exhorts, by attending to the way in which it is to be preserved; namely, *in the bond of peace*.

I.

It is a maxim of undoubted truth, that in their religious capacity, mankind are subject only to the authority of God, and of their own consciences. Another may suggest arguments and motives to prevail upon us to relinquish sentiments that he sees to be erroneous and dangerous; and to embrace his own. And to do this is oftentimes a duty for some persons; and a part of christian charity in all. But there the matter is to rest. The success of such charitable endeavours is to be left to the force of persuasion; and no other force is to be used. To act otherwise, and to compell to an outward religious profession, when there is no inward approbation and willingness, is to violate the most sacred rights of conscience, and break that bond of peace, by which alone, rational beings, of capacities and attainments infinitely diversified, and independent of each other in religious matters, can live in unity together. A spirit of dominion however, and tyranny over conscience, soon began to discover itself among Christians; and still continues

nues to hold the greatest part of them in all countries, under the most abject slavery. The evil might have been prevented, if the apostle's argument for christian unity, immediately following the words of the text, had been attended to and regarded. *There is one body* (says he) *and one spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling: One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.* Eph. iv. 4, 5, 6. i. e. All Christians are equal, and upon a level in the things that concern their salvation. No one is to dictate with authority to another. For they are all *One body*, as it were; consisting indeed of *divers members*; some more useful, and therefore more honourable than others: but no one *head*, or Lord of another: all under the direction of *One Spirit, one rule of faith*, and *one Lord* Jesus Christ, the author of that faith, and dispenser of that spirit and power of God, and *head of his body*, the church; himself subordinate to, and receiving all his powers from the One God and Father of all.

For any man therefore to put his own sense upon the words of Christ and of the holy Spirit, and require others to accept that sense only and subscribe to the truth of it; is to set up his spirit and wisdom against the holy spirit and wisdom of God, and to usurp the province of Christ, the sole law-giver and head of his church. We may give out explanations and illustrations of the holy scriptures; and re-commend

commend them to others: but we are not to require or expect them to be embraced by others but as they shall be found by them to be agreeable to that holy scripture, whose true meaning we endeavour to point out.

In the *word* of God, as in his *works*, there are treasures of wisdom still unexplored. We are commanded to *search for wisdom*.----Prov. (2 Peter i. 5.) to *add knowlege* to all the other christian virtues; and by no means to lock up our * mind and reasonable powers at any time, and shut out further information and improvement. Neither may numbers of Christians in society tie themselves up against receiving additional light and knowledge, by framing articles of faith, from which they are never to recede. Much less are churches or societies of Christians in one age to fetter and confine all future generations of men and societies of

* “ Studious and inquisitive men, commonly at such an age, at forty or fifty at the utmost, have fixed and settled their judgments in most points, and, as it were, *made their last understandings*; supposing that they have thought, or read, or heard, what can be said on all sides of things; and after this, they grow positive and impatient of contradiction, thinking it a disparagement to them to alter their judgment. But our deceased friend was so wise, as to be willing to learn to the last; knowing that no man can grow wiser without some change of his mind, without gaining some knowledge which he had not, or correcting some error that he had before.”

Tillotson's sermon at the funeral of Dr. Whichcote.

It is hard to say, whether this sentiment doth more honour to Dr. *Whichcote*, or to the wise and humble Archbishop, who reports it with so much satisfaction.

B

Christians,

Christians, from seeing farther into the intent of God's word, and interpreting it differently from themselves; a conduct this, as common among private Christians, and churches, in all ages, as it is tyrannical and reproachful. As the servants of God, and disciples of Christ, we can only submit to the authority of Christ in his written word; and in the sense we ourselves put upon it, and not that of another.

II.

But it has been the doctrine of too many, in all periods of the Christian church, that peace and unity are not to be attained, unless you bring all Christians to be of one opinion in religion.

Uniformity of opinion is of specious sound, and very imposing on weak minds, who look no farther than the surface of things. But Almighty God could never make that the only way to peace and unity, which is in itself impracticable and impossible to such creatures as we are: and the very appearance of which cannot be kept up without the loss of what is infinitely more valuable, of virtue and integrity; without tempting many to make no use at all of their understandings, or to dissemble their better knowledge. For our opinions are not in our own power. They depend upon the light and evidence with which truth is presented to our minds. And this appears so differently to different men, through the diversity of their prejudices, natural abilities, and means of improvement; that it cannot be but we must differ

differ widely in our judgments concerning many things, on a subject of such compass and variety, as that of revealed religion. And you may as well require all mankind to be of the same size and complexion, as of the same sentiment in all those respects, which you perhaps shall think important. For the one is as little in their power, and as unlikely to be attained as the other.

III.

When other arguments have failed, holy scripture has been pressed into the hard service of enslaving mankind to one system of religious opinions: though such system oftentimes far from agreeing with holy scripture; is oft in direct opposition to it.

Thus because St. Paul exhorts 2 Cor. xiii. 11. *to be of one mind*: and in another place, 1 Cor. i. 10. *I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and the same judgment.* Hence it is inferred, that there ought to be no difference in opinion amongst Christians: but that they ought to be all of *the same mind, and the same judgment*; at least in *fundamental points* of faith, as they are usually distinguished.

We shall in vain search the New Testament for fundamental points of faith, one only excepted, the belief of which is indeed necessary for every Christian; namely, that *Jesus is the*
 B 2 *Christ,*

Christ, the son of God. Without this no one can be a Christian. And he that sincerely believes this, will believe and do every thing else, that Jesus taught and commanded. Our Saviour and his apostles, tell us not any thing of that long catalogue of other necessary articles of faith, commonly insisted on. These are generally, either misapplications of holy scripture ill understood; or obscure, uncertain deductions from it, about which good men may well hold different sentiments. So that it might weaken the divine authority and inspiration of the apostle, to suppose him requiring men to be of one mind and judgment in points of so much doubtfulness and obscurity. But the case is far different. St. Paul, in this place, did very properly require of the Corinthian Christians, a strict obedience to those directions for their religious conduct, which he had clearly and sufficiently made known to them, and to be of *one mind and judgment* in those matters. Submitting to the authority of the apostle, was submitting to the authority of God himself, from whom he received it. But this can be no rule for other men, who have no authority to demand an implicit submission to their decrees.

It will moreover be found, that in these and the like warm exhortations to unanimity, the view of the apostle was to prevent unnecessary disputes, and the spirit of faction amongst the brethren, and not to enforce an exact uniformity of religious opinion and practice. For, at
other

other times, he allows a latitude and variety. Thus, *Rom.* xiv. he candidly admits and allows the scruples of some Jewish Believers, in continuing to observe their new moons and sabbaths ; and in forbearing to eat animal food at public entertainments, lest they should taste such things as were forbidden by the law of Moses, which they still held obligatory to themselves.

IV.

Since then an uniformity of opinion in the things of religion is not to be attained, nor is required of us ; it follows, that God never designed that Christians should be all of one sentiment, or formed into one great church, as we speak : but that there should be different sects of Christians, and different churches. This, I say, plainly appears to be the appointment of God, however many have been led away to think and act as if it were not so.

After our Lord's apostles were dead, the divine instructions which they left in writing would be thought to admit of various interpretations ; and different judgments and conclusions from them would be formed concerning many points both of doctrine and discipline ; of the manner of conducting divine worship, of administering baptism and the Lord's supper, and the like. Some would be content with what was more plain and simple ; and keep as near as possible to the language, rule, and example of Christ, and his apostles. Others would speculate farther, and mix more of their own wisdom with that of the gospel : with no ill design
at

at first, but thinking that such additions and enlargements tended to edification; yet thus making a bad precedent for after-times. And in this sort, different sects, and churches, or worshipping societies of Christians would be formed: all professing to follow the same rule of holy scripture; but following it in different ways according to their own apprehensions. Each would possess a right of adhering to their own sentiments, and method of worshipping God, without controul, so long as they did not disturb the public peace. And in the midst of these differences and varieties, *the unity of the spirit was still to be kept in the bond of peace*; by a brotherly affection, and friendly correspondence one with another.

V.

While this friendly benevolent temper is cultivated towards each other, the different sects and churches amongst Christians, far from being a hurt or discredit to religion, are an honour and of singular service to it.

For thus a spirit of enquiry into the grounds of their common faith and dissent from each other, is excited and kept alive. They are prevented from sinking into a criminal indolence and indifference in a matter of such high importance as that of religion; and from the two bad extremes of rejecting or receiving it, without due examination. But like those persons, whom St. Luke so highly commends, Acts xvii. 11. *they search the scriptures daily, whether those things are true*; and 1 Pet. iii. 15. *are*

are ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh them a reason of the hope that is in them. This rational satisfaction about the grounds of their religion and their duty, is what the bulk of mankind are capable of attaining no less than the philosopher. * And the Christian

* There is an admirable passage in proof of this, in Mr. LOCKE's *Reasonableness of Christianity as delivered in the scriptures*; where this true philosopher and christian has shewn, that *the use of reason in religion is not to be denied to any part of mankind*; and how far all are capable of it. " The bulk of mankind (saith that excellent person) have not leisure nor capacity for demonstration; nor can carry a train of proofs; which in that way they must always depend upon for conviction, and cannot be required to assent till they see the demonstration. Wherever they stick, the teachers are always put upon proof, and must clear the doubt by a thread of coherent deductions from the first principle, how long, or how intricate soever that be. And you may as soon hope to have all the day-labourers and tradesmen, the spinsters and dairy-maids perfect mathematicians, as to have them perfect in *Ethicks* this way. Hearing plain commands, is the sure and only course to bring them to obedience and practice. The greatest part cannot know, and therefore they must believe. And I ask, whether one coming from heaven in the power of God, in full and clear evidence and demonstration of miracles, giving plain and direct rules of morality and obedience, be not likelier to enlighten the bulk of mankind, and set them right in their duties, and bring them to do them, than by reasoning with them from general notions, and principles of human reason? And were all the duties of life clearly demonstrated; yet I conclude, when well considered, that method of teaching men their duties, would be thought proper only for a few, who had much leisure, improved understandings, and were used to abstract reasonings. But the instruction
of

Christian thus formed, whose life agrees with his holy profession, is the brightest ornament to it.

In the first ages also of our faith, and long time afterwards, before printing was discovered, those numerous sects and churches into which Christians were divided, were, under divine providence, instrumental in preserving the holy scriptures pure and unadulterated.

“ of the people were best still to be left to the precepts
 “ and principles of the gospel. The healing of the sick,
 “ the restoring of sight to the blind by a word, the
 “ raising, and being raised from the dead, are matters of
 “ fact, which they can without difficulty conceive; and
 “ that he who does such things, must do them by the
 “ assistance of a divine power. These things lye level to
 “ the ordinarieſt apprehension. He that can distinguish
 “ between sick and well, lame and sound, dead and alive,
 “ is capable of this doctrine. To one who is once per-
 “ suaded that Jesus Christ was sent by God to be a king,
 “ and a Saviour of those who do believe in him; all his
 “ commands become principles: There needs no other
 “ proof for the truth of what he says, but that he said it.
 “ And then there needs no more but to read the inspired
 “ books, to be instructed: All the duties of morality lye
 “ there clear, and plain, and easy to be understood.
 “ And here I appeal, whether this be not the surest, the
 “ safest, and most effectual way of teaching: Especially
 “ if we add this farther consideration; that *as it suits the*
 “ *lowest capacities of reasonable creatures, so it reaches*
 “ *and satisfies, nay, enlightens the highest.* And the most
 “ elevated understandings cannot but submit to the au-
 “ thority of this doctrine as divine; which coming from
 “ the mouths of a company of illiterate men, hath not
 “ only the attestation of miracles, but reason to confirm
 “ it; since they delivered no precepts but such, as though
 “ reason of itself had not clearly made out, yet it could
 “ not but assent to when thus discovered; and think it-
 “ self indebted for the discovery.” *Locke’s Reasonableness*
of Christianity, &c. p. 279, 280, 281.

Their

Their zeal for their respective opinions would prompt them to multiply copies of those sacred books ; and would also lead them to keep a watchful eye, and be a check on each other, that they did not falsify or corrupt them, in favour of their particular systems.

In process of time indeed, one great, pretended, catholic church, did attempt to swallow up and destroy all the rest, and force all Christians to be of one mind ; and for many long ages nearly succeeded in her attempt. The grossest darkness, ignorance and idolatry, accompanied with the most enormous wickedness, were the natural consequence of such a *constrained dead uniformity*, of debarring men from the use of their understandings in the things of God. And, had not those days been shortened, gospel light and truth must have perished out of the world.

In later times, great benefits have been derived to true religion, from those who have refused to submit to the impositions of civil and ecclesiastical authority in matters of faith ; and who, on that principle, have had the virtue and courage to depart from the established forms in their several countries, to worship God in the way they believed most acceptable to him. Their conduct has led many to think favourably of and enquire into the reality and importance of the evidences for christianity ; and their noble pleas for themselves and for the liberty of worshipping God according to their consciences, have opened the eyes of not a

few to see the necessity of allowing to others what each claimed for themselves. And until the several public establishments of religion shall be more simplified; *the only true God, the Father*, acknowledged and worshipped according to the teaching of the holy scriptures, and all authority over conscience disowned; it must be of infinite service to piety, integrity, and the gospel, that the numbers of Dissenters from such establishments should remain and increase.

VI.

Nor can it with truth be said, though it often hath been said, that different sects of religion in a country, have a tendency to disturb the public peace and quiet. On the contrary, as far as they conduce to make men better Christians, which they do in a great degree, they contribute to make them more useful and peaceable members of society.

But it must not be dissembled, for it cannot be disowned, that the disputes and contentions of Christians with each other, have been the source of the most lasting animosities, and caused great miseries and disturbances in the world.

But let not the mild and gentle doctrine of the gospel be therefore slandered, and charged with these evils; which breathes no other spirit but that of kindness and benevolence, and requires it of all who come under its discipline. Let those rather bear the blame, the civil powers, the princes and states of this world, who have
given

given life and importance to these disputes, that would otherwise have died away of themselves, by interfering with them: who instead of affording protection to all the parties, have lent their aid to one to molest and destroy the other: who for ends of ambition and lawless power, have courted the most numerous and powerful sects in their respective countries, pouring in wealth, and honours, and authority upon them, whilst they have generally deprived the inferior number of fortunes, and life, and liberty more precious than life. Can it be wondered, that such oppression has made men mad? that such partial, iniquitous proceedings have kindled wars and tumults, and set the world in a flame? Let but the civil governors, the princes and kings of the earth, act the same part over again, and make themselves parties to all the religious disputes of their subjects, throwing the weight of their authority and favour into the scale of one side to the depression of the other, and the same wild scenes in proportion would return and be renewed.

But wise experience has taught them a better lesson. A happier state of things we preface is advancing: when it shall no longer be the road to honours and great wealth for ministers of religion to be vehement in contending for opinions doubtful in themselves and of little use or importance, save that they have once been established: But the honour and reward will be to those who have most laboured

to make themselves and others wise and good : When the civil magistrate shall no more say to those who have a just claim to his protection and favour ; *You shall not enjoy the privileges and benefits of good subjects, unless you worship God as I do ; or as my Priest directs you to do.* But all shall enjoy a like protection from the state, who give a like security for their obedience to it.

To the honour of our gracious Sovereign and the government under which we have the happiness to live ; let it be observed, that although not a few amongst us, lye undeservedly under the terror of *severe *, unjust, penal laws, made in bad and dark times,* yet these laws sleep : they are never put in execution : they are almost universally reprobated and condemned. The growing enlightened spirit of the nation ; the spirit of the times, and the wisdom, justice, and candour of the British legislature, are a pledge to us, that such laws whose edge is turned only against

* “ By 9 and 10 W. III. c. 32. If any person educated in, or having made profession of the christian religion, shall be convicted in any of the courts of Westminster, or at the assizes, *of denying any one of the persons of the Holy Trinity to be God, &c.* he shall for the *first* offence, be judged incapable of any office ; and for the *second* offence, shall be disabled to sue any action, or to be guardian, executor, or administrator, or to take any legacy or deed of gift, or to bear any office, civil or military, or benefice ecclesiastical, for ever, and also shall suffer imprisonment for three years.”

the

the most conscientious men, shall e'er long be repealed.

In the mean while, if the above reasoning be solid and convincing, it may yield us a full satisfaction, that those who withdraw themselves from the established worship of their country, to worship God in a way more agreeable to his will, as they apprehend, are thus not only approving themselves to him whose favour is to be sought above all things: but do also thereby demonstrate themselves good citizens and useful subjects of the state, not inferior to any others; whilst they are studious to keep *the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*; and live in perfect charity, and the exchange of all friendly and benevolent offices with their brethren from whom they separate on a religious account and principle of conscience.

VII.

But to draw towards a conclusion; and address myself immediately to those who are, or shall be united in christian society with us.

Far will it be from my purpose ever to treat of controversial matters from this place, though something in vindication of our present conduct and right of assembling ourselves here together, was now judged proper to be laid before you.

The design of churches or congregations of Christians, is to join together in the public worship of Almighty God, a duty of highest

est concernment ; and to promote each others salvation more effectually than could have been done by Individuals alone. And therefore, though we are still, as we can, to endeavour that *all men may be saved, and come unto the knowledge of the truth* : we are under an especial obligation and nearer tye to those with whom we are thus voluntarily united ; to be helpful to each other in the concerns of a future world ; *to watch over one another, and to excite unto love and to good works ; that we may be the salt of the earth ; lights of the world ; and that our light may so shine before men that they may see our good works, and glorify our Father which is in heaven.*

This end, we have, my brethren, in common with all christian societies ; and this is the most important end of all, and principally to be regarded.

But added to this, there is another end peculiar to us and reason of forming ourselves into a separate congregation, distinct from that of our national church ; and this is, that we may be at liberty *to worship God alone*, after the command and example of our Saviour Christ. So that if any ask what we are, or for what purpose we are joined together in a christian society ; our answer is, with the apostle, “ we are a people, *that worship God in the spirit, and make our boast in Christ Jesus.*” Phil. iii. 3.

The

The PRAYER after the SERMON.

WE have all reason to thank thee, O Lord our God, for that perfect rule and way of life and our duty, which thou hast taught us by our Lord Jesus Christ; wherein thou hast graciously consulted our present peace and enjoyment, as thou hast most munificently provided for our future happiness.

For nothing is there wanting, O thou kind Father of men, to turn this earth again into Paradise, and make us completely blessed, but to copy after that character of thyself which thou hast set before us for our imitation, and obey the precepts of thy Son which lead us to it.

For thou, who art in thine own nature love and goodness absolute; hath commanded us to love and to do good to all, that we may be *thy children*, perfect, and resembling thee in our degree, as thou, *our Father in Heaven, art perfect*.

Thou commandest not hard things; or that are too high for us: but only to love one another with an affection steady, rational, manly, and virtuous; and to be happy.

Wretched, unworthy creatures are we; that will not comply with so easy a rule of so kind a master.

Remove at last those bars, which we have put to our own happiness: that proud conceit and ignorance, which stamps such undue value on ourselves and our opinions, and would have all others bend to us; which leads us to place a vain merit in a faith which is nothing more than an easy credulity; and a religion, pretending to come from thee, yet void of charity.

Preserve us also from blind, intemperate zeal;
and

and the rage of dealing out rash and uncharitable judgments concerning the future condition of others, who may differ in some things from us; lest we be guilty of invading thy awful prerogative, to whom alone the heart of man is known; and who only hast power to save and to destroy.

But implant in our hearts a temper of benevolence and charity; *charity* mild and gentle to all; *which thinketh no evil; which beareth all things; believeth all things; hopeth all things*: That this divine temper being rooted in us, and our whole character molded into it, we may not confine our good opinion and offices of kindness to those of our own sect and persuasion; but may embrace all men with the most hearty approbation and good will, as equally thy children, dear to thee, with ourselves; and equally in thy favour, whilst seeking sincerely to please thee; and may thus rejoice in them, and in all the good that they receive or do.

In requiring this temper and disposition to be in us, which is in thyself, thou givest us a pleasing idea and foretaste of the happiness which thou hast reserved for us beyond the grave; and fittest and trainest us up for the enjoyment of it; when the happiness of all will become our own, by our loving them and taking pleasure therein; and will be as boundless as that universal community of rational and virtuous beings, with whose blissful state and characters we hope hereafter to become acquainted.

This, O God, is that blessed state to which we aspire; *when charity shall have its perfect work*: for which thou didst send us a divine teacher and Saviour, Jesus, to prepare and to bring us to it. For him we bless thee; and through him, according to thy appointment, we desire to offer up unto thee all praise, adoration and thanksgiving, now and for ever.

F I N I S.



